

STATEMENT FROM GENERAL JAMES F. AMOS, COMMANDANT OF THE MARINE CORPS, ON THE REMOVAL OF THE F-35B FROM PROBATIONARY STATUS

HEADQUARTERS US MARINE CORPS, Jan. 20, 2012 – “I welcome the Secretary of Defense’s announcement removing the F-35B Lightning II from “probation” and granting it full status commensurate with the other two variants of the Joint Strike Fighter. I continue to be encouraged by the strong and steady progress that the F-35B team has made over the past year.

As the F-35B program continues to mature, I want to reconfirm my commitment to the Department of Defense’s leadership and to Congress that the introduction of the F-35B into our fleet training squadrons and combat units will be done responsibly based on the merits of the test program, subsequent satisfactory progress in the operational evaluation, and the integrity of the airframe design itself.

As the principal service chief responsible for the fielding and operational employment of the short take-off-and-vertical-landing (STOVL) F-35, I will continue to closely monitor the jet’s progress on a daily basis, as I have over the past 13 months.

The F-35B represents the Marine Corps’ ongoing effort to modernize our aging fleet of aircraft and to take advantage of 5th generation technology that will greatly enhance our capabilities as America’s expeditionary crisis response force.

Our nation’s shipbuilding and sustainment plan calls for 22 capital ships (11 carriers and 11 large deck amphibious warships) capable of deploying fixed-wing tactical strike aircraft. Full fielding of the F-35B will ensure our nation preserves this important deterrent and response capability as the STOVL F-35B is the only model capable of operating off of our large deck amphibious warships, and in austere and remote expeditionary land-based operating environments.

For decades our nation has benefitted from the STOVL capability that is now resident in the F-35B. From Operation Desert Storm to today’s present conflict in Afghanistan, STOVL technology has enabled tactical fixed-wing aviation to operate from expeditionary locations ashore and afloat in close proximity to ground forces. The responsive and persistent intelligence, surveillance, reconnaissance and strike capabilities have saved lives and provided operational commanders with a tremendous tactical advantage.

The F-35B will replace and perform the roles of three of our aging aircraft, specifically the F/A-18, AV-8B, and EA-6B. This consolidation of three airframes into the F-35B will save the American taxpayers and the Marine Corps significant monies in operations and maintenance costs over the decades to come.

I remain bullish about the future of F-35B and committed to ensuring that the Marine Corps can rapidly respond to crises around the world and thus protect the American people.”